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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Communications

Electronic Media Services

Washington, DC 20250-1340

Letter No. 2644

January 7, 1994

FARM DEBT -- One of the positive farm sector economic indicators this year is comparison of the actual debt-to-asset ratio with the maximum debt-to-asset ratio that is supportable by cash income from farm operations. It appears that debt could rise about 20 percent without producing an uncomfortable squeeze. It indicates that the farm sector is better financially positioned to absorb short term regional losses, such as those occurring last year, than it would have been in the mid-'80s. While most measures point to an improved farm economy, cash income levels in 1994 will depend on relatively high government payments. Contact: James Ryan (202) 219-0798.

U.S. EXPORTS TO CHINA -- In the first of a series of steps opening China to a wide variety of U.S. fruits and vegetables, USDA has reached agreement with Chinese plant quarantine officials allowing import of U.S. apples. The apples must originate in designated orchards in Washington state and be packaged in designated facilities. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy notes this is the first time that China has imported American apples in commercial quantities. China is also importing nearly one million tons of U.S. wheat. Export of apples and wheat to China were two of the topics Espy discussed with Chinese officials during his trade mission there last year. Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.

FOOD DEMAND -- Growth in food expenditures during the next 20 years will be at a slower rate than the previous two decades. From 1970 to 1990 total food expenditures grew by 39 percent. USDA studies indicate that during 1990 to 2010 food expenditures will grow about 31 percent. Not all food categories will experience similar growth. Fish, dairy products, and fresh fruit are expected to grow less than 16 percent. The greatest gain is expected in food consumed away from home, which will grow by 37 percent. Contact: Noel Blisard (202) 219-0862.

PROTECTING HAY -- In sections of the Midwest and Southeast hay is in short supply. USDA Extension Service notes that leaving round bales unprotected outside can waste 20-30 percent of the hay. Place the bales on well-drained sites or on pallets, and use hay wraps or tarps. Contact: Dan Rahn (912) 681-5189.

IMPROVING MEAT AND POULTRY INSPECTION -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy has announced his intention to mandate Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point systems in meat and poultry plants nationwide. A roundtable on implementing the systems will be held early this year. USDA is initiating and accelerating change to improve the safety of meat supplies from farm to table. Secretary Espy has appointed a liaison from USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service to work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to investigate and trace deadly bacteria that causes foodborne illness. Espy says the Department must continue to enhance the safety of the meat and poultry supply, especially in the area of developing new science. Contact: Mary Dixon (202) 720-4623.

VEGETABLE EXPORTS -- U.S. fresh vegetable exports in fiscal year 1993 totaled 1.7 million tons, valued at nearly \$1 billion. Volume was up 4 percent and value up 15 percent from the previous year. Canada remains the leading market for U.S. fresh vegetables, accounting for over 70 percent of total exports. Eleven percent of U.S. fresh vegetable exports went to Japan. The shipments had a value of \$106 million. Mexico registered the biggest increase in volume, 69 percent. Contact: Frank Piason (202) 720-6590.

TOBACCO -- U.S. cigarette manufacturers intend to purchase 288 million pounds of the 1994 flue-cured crop, down nearly one third from last year. U.S. manufactured tobacco exports for the first ten months of 1993 totaled 171,153 tons, valued at \$1.1 billion, a decrease of 18 percent in quality and 19 percent in value from year-earlier levels. However, unmanufactured tobacco imports during the first ten months of 1993 totaled 324,957 tons, valued at \$862 million, a 22 percent increase in quantity and 6 percent in value. Contact: Daniel Stevens (202) 720-9524.

EMPLOYMENT -- In the second quarter of 1993 rural employment grew by a moderate 1.3 percent as compared to the same period a year earlier. The increase in urban employment increased about the same, 1.2 percent. The most rapid rural employment growth tended to be in the Atlantic and Pacific coastal states. The lowest employment growth was in the Northern Plains States. The rural West had the highest growth of unemployment and the largest unemployment rate of any region, 9.3 percent. Contact: Paul Swaim (202) 219-0552.

CAMPGROUND RESERVATIONS -- USDA's Forest Service accepts family and group reservations for many of its campgrounds in the 156 national forests and grasslands. The reservation center makes advance reservations, \$7.50 per family and \$15 for a group site. Call the Forest Service campground reservation number, 1-800-280-2267. For hearing or speech impaired the TDD number is 1-800-879-4496. Weekday hours are 9 am - 9 pm EST, and 11 am - 7 pm Saturday & Sunday. Contact: Jill Bauermeister (202) 205-1134.

WORKER PROTECTION STANDARDS -- All agricultural employers whose workers perform hand labor operations in fields, forests, nurseries, and greenhouses that have been treated with pesticides -- or handle pesticides in these locations -- are covered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's worker protection standard. Agricultural employers must be in compliance with the regulation after April 15, 1994. Owners, operators, and their immediate family members must also comply with provisions of the protection standard. USDA has prepared a 10-page summary of the standard. To order a copy dial toll-free 1-800-999-6779. Cost is \$9 a copy. Contact: Jack Runyan (202) 219-0932.

CAROTENOIDS AND CANCER -- USDA research supports the hypothesis that the anti-cancer potential of carotenoids is due to its anti-oxidant capability. Many members of the chemical family known as carotenoids change into benign compounds indicating that they protect cell molecules, including human DNA. Population studies have linked a high intake of fruits and vegetables rich in carotenoids with a lower risk of cancers of the lung, esophagus, colon, head and neck. Carotenoids are found in the red, orange and yellow pigments that give tomatoes, carrots and squash their distinctive colors. They're also abundant in dark green, leafy vegetables. Contact: Frederick Khachik (301) 504-8830.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1909 -- Brenda Curtis interviews USDA General Sales Manager Chris Goldthwait about historic trade policy achievements in 1993 and the implications for world grain trade in the years to come. (Weekly 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1391 -- Buffalo grass; U.S. strawberries gain popularity; fading holiday pictures; home pesticide safety; the medfly battle vs. the environment. (Weekly 2-1/2 to 3 minute features.)

AGRITAPE FEATURES #1901 -- Russian debt update; China's grain trade outlook; 1994 better for soybean growers?; 1994 tobacco program; soybeans on optional flexible acres. (Weekly agricultural features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1654 -- Urban's knob project; watershed model; insect indigestion; ant busters; fire ant disease. (Weekly research features.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Tuesday, January 18. crop & weather update, vegetables; Friday, January 21, livestock and poultry, catfish processing, livestock slaughter; Monday, January 24, U.S. ag trade update; Tuesday, January 25, crop & weather update. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this advance lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358. COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on Smokey Bear attaining the age of 50. Lynn Wyvill reports on food safety at college.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA chief meteorologist Norton Strommen on the latest weather and crop conditions.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- DeBoria Janifer reports on the Weston Genealogical Library. Pat O'Leary reports about USDA research on vitamin A. Lynn Wyvill reports on new products from wood waste.

CHANGES -- A reminder that the final program of Agriculture Update with anchors Eric Parsons and Lori Spiczka was transmitted January 3. Farm program information that Ag Update provided will be contained in the television service satellite transmissions.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays at 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT; Saturdays at 10:00 a.m., EDT; and Mondays at 8:00 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

LEVEE REPAIR...is a major concern of producers in the flooded Midwest, says Cindy Zimmerman (Brownfield Network, Jefferson City, MO). It will have a major impact on plans for spring planting. Cindy is spending time in the air too. She covered the Missouri and the Iowa Farm Bureau meetings on the same day. New voice on the network is Tom Brand, from Hopkins, MO.

WINTER MEETINGS...have consumed a major portion of the schedule of Garry Kinnett (WIAI, Danville, IL). Gary says he promos the meetings on his broadcasts in an effort to have producers attend and get the latest information, giving them an upper hand in these changing times.

FORUM FOR GRAIN BROKERS...to provide their 1994 forecasts was provided by the 8th annual WKFI Gain With Your Grain seminar, says Chip Nelson (WKFI, Wilmington, OH). Chip is taking his morning farm program on the road once a week to area restaurants, broadcasting the plans and concerns of farmers in his area. Program is titled "Koffee W/KFI."

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DELTA AG EXPO...January 25-26 will be covered by Chuck Early (WNIX, Greenville, MS). Also on Chuck's schedule is the ag lending forum and its announcement of the Mid-Delta Farmer of the Year. Producers in his region brought in a good crops of rice and soybeans, but cotton was expensive to produce this season.

CONGRATULATIONS...to Orion Samuelson (WGN/Tribune Network, Chicago). For the fifth year he served as moderator for the 27th Missouri Governor's Conference on Agriculture.

LOOKING...Todd Whelan (KVLH, Pauls Valley, OK). Station sold. Call at (405) 447-3293.

RETIRIED...January 1, Louis Rosandick (WFHR, Wisconsin Rapids). Lou's broadcasting capped a 44-year career in agriculture: Two-years as a vocational agriculture instructor; 31-years as a county agricultural agent; and 11 years in farm radio broadcasting. Lou says now it'll be fishing, hunting, golfing, snowmobiling, and serving on the county board of supervisors.

VIC POWELL *Vic Powell*
Office of Communications